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## A Centennial History - 1887-1987

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## A CENTENNIAL HISTORY

1887-1987

The current official statement of the aims of The Catholic University of America, promulgated in 1970, transmits consistently the goals of the University's founders, the Roman Catholic bishops of the United States. Meeting in the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, in 1866, the bishops expressed their earnest desire to have under Catholic auspices a university in which "all the letters and sciences, both sacred and profane, could be taught." During the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, in 1884, they proposed to use a gift from Miss Mary Gwendoline Caldwell of Newport, Rhode Island, to establish a school of theology from which a complete university might develop. Pope Leo XIII formally approved the project of a national university on April 10, 1887 (commemorated annually as Founders Day), and later appointed John Joseph Keane, Bishop of Richmond, as the first Rector. Civil incorporation in the District of Columbia was completed on April 21, 1887, by a Board of Trustees of seventeen members.

Classes in the School of Sacred Sciences opened on November 13, 1889. Six years later, in 1895, Schools of Philosophy and Social Science were inaugurated. An Institute of Technology established in 1896 became the School of Technological Sciences in 1898, when the School of law was established and the School of Social Science dissolved.

The law school has been a member of The Association of American law Schools since 1921 and is approved by The American Bar Association as well. Since 1966, the school has occupied Leahy Hall on the university campus. With the present enrollment of approximately five hundred and fifty full time students and two hundred and fifty part time students at the law school, classes are small and faculty interchange is enhanced. Individual faculty members are easily available for informal sessions, thus providing a more personalized and meaningful education in the law. The Law School's library, named to honor Monsignor Robert J. White—dean of the law school from 1937 to 1948—presently contains more than 140,000 volumes, and the collection is being expanded continuously.

In 1906 the School of Technological Sciences and departments in the various sciences were consolidated into a separate School of Science. These were the first steps in a structural evolution that led to a comprehensive reorganization in 1930 when, following developing patterns in the United States, the

College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering were established.

The addition of several professional schools since 1930, the consolidation resulting in the establishment of the School of Religious Studies in 1973, and the integration of the College and Graduate School into a single School of Arts and Sciences in 1975, have given the university nine Faculties or Schools—those of Arts and Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Law, Library and Information Science, Music, Nursing, Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Social Service.

Like some sister institutions founded in the same period the university was originally conceived as a vestibule for graduate instruction and research exclusively. Within a few years after its establishment, however, it began to offer undergraduate courses. Commencement programs show that an undergraduate degree was conferred as early as 1897. In 1904, in keeping with a growing awareness of the importance of the undergraduate college in the American university system, a specific authority was established to supervise undergraduate instruction and campus life. Under Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, Rector from 1909 to 1927, undergraduates began to receive sympathetic and systematic attention, and the seven years of his successor, Bishop (later Archbishop) James Hugh Ryan, were marked by two sweeping structural reorganizations of undergraduate administration (1931 and 1934) and by swiftly rising standards in undergraduate education.

At present, the undergraduate body is composed of students enrolled in the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering and Architecture, the School of Music, the School of Nursing, and the School of Philosophy. The undergraduates enrolled in these five schools are selected by the same admissions authority and according to the same standards; they participate to a considerable extent in the same classes, share other features of undergraduate life, and are governed largely by the same regulations.

#### AIMS OF THE UNIVERSITY

The Catholic University of America is a community of scholars, both faculty and students, set apart to discover, preserve, and impart the truth in all its forms, with particular reference to the needs and opportunities of the nation. As a university, it is essentially a free and autonomous center of study and an agency serving the needs of human society. It welcomes the collaboration of all scholars of good will who, through the process of study and reflection, contribute to these aims in an atmosphere of academic competence where freedom is fostered and where the only constraint upon truth is truth itself.

As a Catholic university, it desires to cultivate and impart an understanding of the Christian faith within the context of all forms of human inquiry and values. It seeks to assure, in an institutional manner, the proper intellectual and academic witness to Christian inspiration in individuals and in the community, and to provide a place for continuing reflection, in the light of Christian faith, upon the growing treasure of human knowledge.

As a member of the American academic community, it accepts the standards and procedures of American institutions and seeks to achieve distinction within the academic world.

Faithful to the Christian message as it comes through the Church and faithful to its own national traditions, The Catholic University of America has unique responsibilities to be of service to Christian thought and education in the Catholic community as well as to serve the nation and the world.

